

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0302**

April 3, 2023

The Honorable Debra Haaland  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Secretary Haaland:

I write to request additional information on current agency efforts and further needs to improve efficiency and accountability of federal permitting for infrastructure projects, regarding the Navajo Nation and use of gravel pits owned by the Nation.

In San Juan County, there are 258 miles of school bus routes in the Navajo Nation, 87 miles of which remain unpaved. Across the entire Nation, 77 percent of the roads are dirt. The roads – turned muddy with rain or snow – cut ever deeper into the earth with the combined effects of weather, traffic, and maintenance. Snowpack or mud can mean missed days at work or school. One minor rainstorm can cut Navajo Nation off from the outside world. In order to construct new roads, Navajo Nation needs access to their own gravel pits, which are at present unusable due to your Department's lengthy regulatory approval process.

Despite repeated requests for your Department to waive permit requirements or grant a permit, the Nation's gravel pits are still unusable, exacerbating transportation issues for the community. Without necessary permits from your Department, Navajo Nation cannot be self-sufficient.

The tribe currently has the capability to produce sand and gravel resources that can be used for road improvement projects in the community efficiently and at a low cost. However, due to government bureaucracy, they have to transport road materials into Navajo Nation from outside companies. It currently costs the Nation \$2 to \$3 million to pave one mile of road due to the high costs of transporting road materials from companies located off the Navajo Nation. This is unacceptable.

Navajo Nation and their citizens, whom we are charged with providing for in Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution, should be enabled to fix their community, not hindered. These are roads on federal lands for federal trustees to get to federal schools on federal school buses. To refuse to act is a total abdication of Constitutional responsibility. We should remember, the authority of a state and its government are created and sustained by the consent of its people, who are at present, being bogged down in bureaucracy.

So that I may assist your Department in its work to improve the quality of life in Arizona and be responsive to Navajo Nation, I hope you can respond in writing to this request.

Sincerely,



Eli Crane  
Member of Congress